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# Camellias

AT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM



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# Camellias AT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM



In the late fall, winter, and early spring, the camellias are in bloom at the National Arboretum.

The Camellia plantings, located on the edge of the Cryptomeria Valley Planting (indicated on the map), are labeled to help visitors identify the various species.

The camellia collection was begun in 1949 with the gift of 100 *Camellia sasanqua* plants from the Garden Club of America. In a few years they were doing so well that the Arboretum decided to broaden its camellia program. Between 1955 and 1959, 90 varieties of *Camellia sasanqua* and 126 varieties of *Camellia japonica* were added to the collection. These plants were the gifts of many private citizens. The present Arboretum collection of several hundred varieties is a result of the stimulus provided by these early gifts.

## BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

Camellias are members of the botanical family *Theaceae*, which includes the common tea plant. *C. sinensis*, as well as the genera *Franklinia*, *Gordonia*, and *Stewartia*. There are approximately 45 species of the genus *Camellia* native to tropical and subtropical Asia. Noted for their conspicuous flowers, camellias are considered by botanists to be evergreen shrubs or small trees.

## KINDS OF CAMELLIAS

Three species of camellias are in general cultivation in the United States: *Camellia japonica*, *Camellia sasanqua*, and *Camellia reticulata*. The first two species are of particular interest here at the Arboretum along with a fourth species, *Camellia oleifera*.

You will also see some plantings of *Camellia rusticana* and *Camellia hiemalis*.

*Camellia japonica* is the most hardy camellia in the Washington, D.C., area. It is the best species for planting along the Atlantic Coast north of Washington, D.C. *C. japonica* generally blooms in the spring.

*Camellia sasanqua* is almost as hardy as *C. japonica*; its northern limit of hardiness along the Atlantic Coast is Washington, D.C. *C. Sasanqua* blooms in October and November. Both *japonica* and *sasanqua* camellias have been grown in China and Japan for centuries for use as ornamental plants.

*Camellia reticulata* is the tenderest of the camellias commonly grown in the United States. It blooms in the spring and has very large flowers. It can be grown outdoors in Southern California, or in the Deep South, but in other areas it needs indoor protection during the winter.

Although *Camellia oleifera* is not in general cultivation throughout the United States, there is a mass planting of *oleifera* seedlings here at the Arboretum. *C. oleifera*, with single white flowers, is known as the oil-bearing camellia. The seeds contain a very high percentage of oil, which is extracted by oriental peoples and used for hair tonic.

Species that are less widely grown but are still of commercial importance in the United States include *C. vernilis*, *C. maliflora*, and *C. saluensis*.

## HISTORY OF CAMELLIAS

Camellias are native from the Indo-China mainland to Korea and the islands that lie offshore. Early merchant seamen trading in these waters took some of the beautiful Japanese camellia plants home to England with them. Later on, between 1783 and 1797, camellias were brought from England to the United States. The first camellia imported was a red-flowering *japonica* variety.



SPECIES OF CAMELLIAS



*JAPONICA*



*RETICULATA*



*SASANQUA*



*OLEIFERA*







## SELECTED LIST OF THE HARDIER CAMELLIAS

J—Japonica

S—Sasanqua

H—Hiemalis

### WHITE

Dawn (Vernalis) (S)  
Finlandia (J)  
Leucantha (J)  
Mine-no-Yuki (S)  
Setsugekka (S)  
White Glory (S)  
White Queen (J)

### RED

Are-Jishi (J)  
Blood of China (J)  
Gov. Mouton (J)  
Hiryu (H)  
Mathotiana (J)  
Tricolor Sieboldi (J)

### VARIEGATED

Donckelarii (J)  
Elegans (J)  
Lady Vansittart (J)  
Ville-de-Nantes (J)

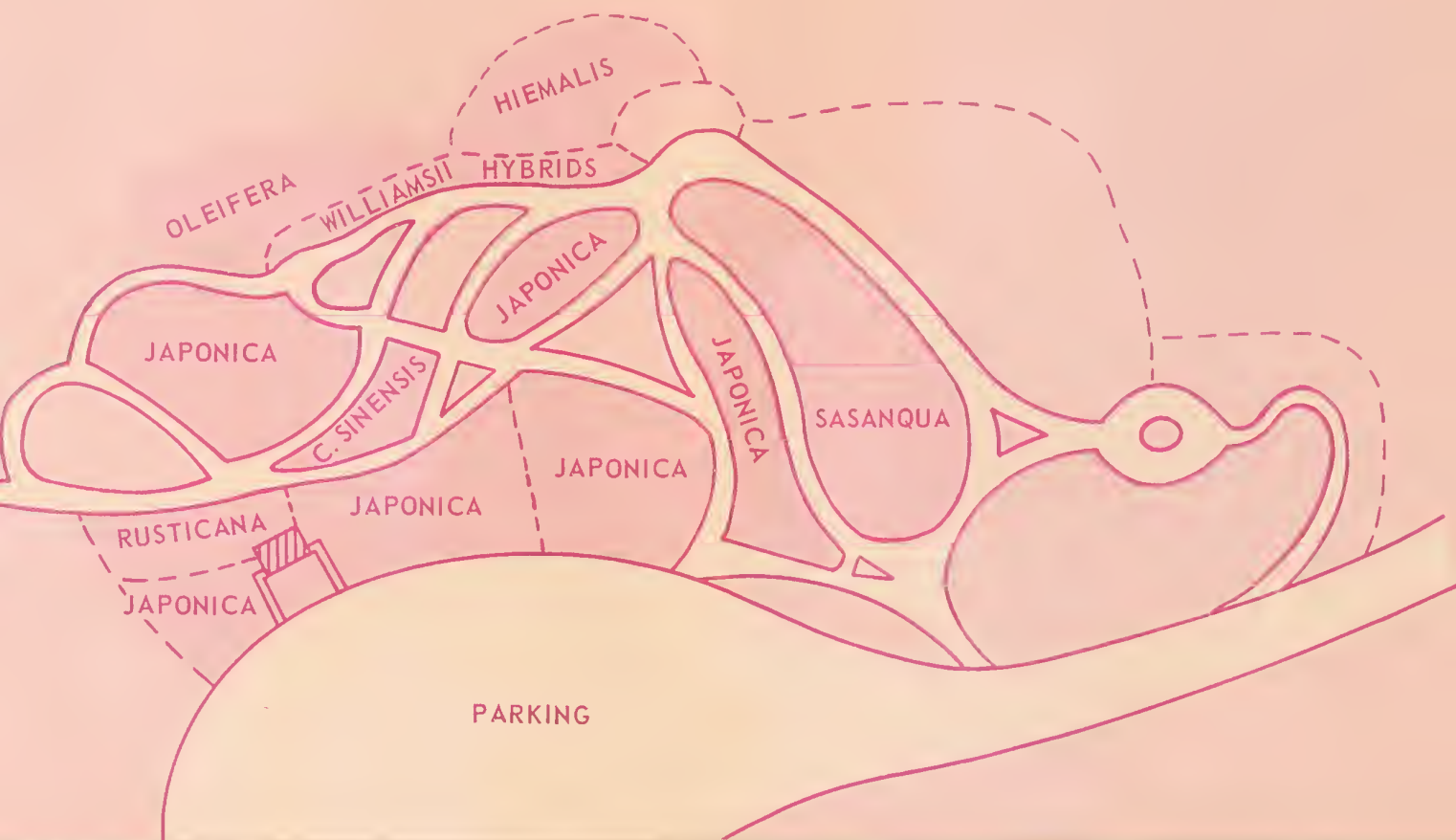
### LIGHT PINK

Agnes O. Solomon  
(dbl. fl.) (S)  
Berenice Boddy (J)  
Dr. Tinsley (J)  
Jean May (dbl. fl.) (S)  
Magnoliaeflora (J)

Marjorie Magnificent (J)  
Papaver (S)  
Pink Perfection (J)

### DEEP PINK OR ROSE

Cleopatra (S)  
Crimson Tide (S)  
Kumasaka (J)  
Lady Clare (J)  
Orchid (S)  
Shishi-gashira (H)  
Showa-no-Sakae (H)  
Sparkling Burgundy (S)



## CULTURAL SUGGESTIONS

Washington, D.C., is located at the northern edge of the "camellia belt." Here, only the hardiest camellia varieties are suitable for outdoor planting. A list of the more hardy varieties has been included in this leaflet.

Camellias do well in slightly acid soils. They will also succeed in neutral soils if fertilizers are used that favor acidity. The soil need not be as acid as that required for azaleas and rhododendrons. A surface mulch is helpful year round; pine needles and pine bark will work well.

Camellias need enough sunlight during the summer months to set flower buds, but very little sunlight during the winter. Camellias also need protection from strong winter winds, which, in the presence of full sunlight, cause leaf burning.

Therefore select a planting site that provides alternating sunshine and shade in the summer, complete shade in the winter, and protection from winter winds. A planting site on the north side of a building or fence or under tall pine trees can provide these conditions.

Although camellias are drought tolerant, they need occasional watering during extended dry spells.

Camellias are relatively free of pests and diseases.

For additional information on the culture of camellias, you can obtain USDA Home and Garden Bulletin 86, "Growing Camellias," by writing to the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. The price for this pamphlet is 25 cents. Please include your zip code.

Washington, D.C.

Revised February 1974